

# Sheep Newsletter

## January 2021

SUMMERLEAZE  
FARM & EQUINE VETS



### Antibiotic Usage Success!



Some good news for the beginning of 2021!..... A recent report by RUMA (Responsible Use of Antibiotics in Agriculture) has found that the sales of antibiotics in the UK to treat farm animals have halved since targets were set in 2017, with the UK now achieving the fifth lowest usage of antibiotics in Europe.

Sales of antibiotics for use in sheep have always been low. However, sheep do make up 40% of the UK livestock biomass so can still make a considerable overall contribution.

In a recent study a group of sheep farmers from Wales managed to cut antibiotic usage during lambing by almost 60% over a two year period. By improving nutrition, hygiene, colostrum quality and management the group of farmers significantly reduced the number of animals treated with no negative impact on production or welfare.

The lambing protocols on these farms included:

- Cleaning out, disinfecting and liming pre-lambing pens between batches
- Keeping water troughs cleaned out regularly
- Treating lame ewes promptly and managing them separately
- Everyone involved in lambing and handling sick lambs wears rubber gloves
- Stomach tubes washed in warm soapy water and disinfected in baby bottle solution
- Lambing pens for sick ewes or aborted ewes kept in separate area to main lambing pens
- Where cow colostrum has to be used the quality is assessed using a refractometer and only that with a reading of 22 or above is used for lambs.

One of the farmers in the study found that one of the simplest and most effective measures he put in place was allowing sufficient feeding space for ewes – 15cm per animal for ad lib forage and 45cm for restricted concentrates. What is your feed space allowance like? Could it be improved?

If you would like any advice regarding rations, housing or protocols leading up to and around lambing please give us a ring.

Remember..... these days using antibiotics for prevention of disease is not an acceptable norm. Think twice before stocking up on Spectam at the beginning of the lambing season, for example. You may be able to use a lot less than you used to or even avoid having to use it at all.

We are implementing a policy of vets speaking to farmers before dispensing any preventative antibiotics. Please don't be offended if a vet gives you a call, we would just like to be kept in the loop and would like to assist you in reducing their use as far as we can.

Overall, though, we would like to say well done on the reduction in preventative antibiotic use we have already seen in our clients.

All the best for 2021!



